

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Every Good Word

by Dan Trygg

“Behold, days are coming,” declares Yahweh, ‘when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵ In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is what He will proclaim to her: Yahweh is our righteousness.’ ¹⁷ For thus says Yahweh, ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; ¹⁸ and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to prepare sacrifices continually.’ ¹⁹ The word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, saying, ²⁰ ‘...If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, ²¹ then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers. ²² As the host of heaven cannot be counted and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.’” Jeremiah 33:14-23

I have mentioned that **in Jeremiah 22, the prophet cursed all the descendants of Josiah, the last good king of Judah.** His son, Shallum, was taken to Egypt, and died there (vs. 11,12). Jehoiakim, would not even be granted an honorable funeral. His corpse would be dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem (vss. 18,19). His son, Jehochin, was carried away to Babylon, and Jeremiah said that “no man of his descendants will prosper, sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah” (vss. 24-30). **This was *shocking!* It looked like the Davidic hope, the promise Yahweh made to David that his throne would last forever, was *not* going to be fulfilled, after all.**

There were a lot of assumptions that people had made, thinking that God would never give them up for destruction. After all, they had the Ark of the Covenant, the Temple of Yahweh, and the Davidic King. **Jeremiah dealt with each of these false hopes: The Ark would be forgotten (Jer. 3:16), the Temple destroyed (7:4; cf. 2 Kg. 25:8-12), and, here, the Davidic Kingdom would come to an end.** Even Zedekiah, the last reigning king, would be given over to the Babylonians (Jer. 21:1-7). His lineage was cut off, as he was forced to watch his sons murdered before his eyes. Then, he was blinded and taken to Babylon (Jer. 39:1-7).

So many times, when it seems all is lost, or that there is no possible way God could turn things around, ...He DOES! In the very next chapter, God begins talking about His intention to bring His scattered people back from the nations where they have been exiled. He even speaks of raising up for David “a righteous Branch” (*tsemach*), who will reign as king, and act wisely and do righteousness and justice in the land. He will be called “Yahweh Our Righteousness” (23:1-6). This word picture harkens back to the previous generation, when Isaiah the prophet declared, “A shoot (*choter*) will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch (*netser*) from his roots will bear fruit” (Isa. 11:1). Between Isaiah’s and Jeremiah’s prophecies, there are three separate Hebrew words here: *choter*, *netser*, and *tsemach*. All three of these words can mean “branch” or “sprout” or “twig”. The word picture is of a shoot or new growth coming out from a larger tree, or from a stump. Either it is descriptive of *an unexpected sprout that springs up from the root, but is not from the main part of the plant*, ...in this case, not from the *expected* line of kings; or it refers to *a new shoot from the original rootstock*, even though it may appear that the lineage of kings has been cut off. What a perfect word picture for what we are dealing with here! The lineage of kings from David through his son, Solomon, has come to a screeching halt. But God is not to be outdone by human unfaithfulness. He can either cause a shoot to spring from this seemingly dead lineage of kings, or He could raise up a shoot from another family line that goes back to David.

When you go back to God’s promise to David, or even to the beginning of Solomon’s reign, **it is quite clear that God extended the covenant promise to Solomon on a conditional basis (1 Kg. 9:4-7).** If he would walk in God’s commandments, and be faithful to Him, *then* God would make his kingdom to be an everlasting kingdom. If he was not faithful, however, his kingdom and/or dynasty would be cut off. God does not spell out, at that point, how this would all work out, but **we see here, in Jeremiah, the end of the Davidic Kingdom through Solomon’s line. Now, God is saying that He is going to raise up a “shoot” from the tree of David, some other connection to the rootstock of David, or some new life from the seemingly dead line of kings.**

Then, if that were not enough of a teaser, ...a hint at some other plan to fulfill the promise to David..., **we have a further declaration by God, in Jeremiah 33, that He will by NO MEANS default on His promise to David or to the sons of Levi.** He made a covenant with David, and a covenant with the house of Levi, that they will “never lack a man to sit on the throne of Israel” and the Levitical priests will “never lack a man before Me to offer up burnt offerings, ...and to prepare sacrifices before Me”. (God had made this covenant promise to the sons of Phineas, the

grandson of Aaron in Numbers 25:1-13, because he stood up for God in the face of rebellion and sin, and was jealous for God's holiness.) **He offers three illustrations to help us grasp how serious this is, in God's mind and heart.** The first is a comparison with God's covenant with day and night. **God's promise to David and Levi are as sure and dependable as night follows day, and day follows night.** The second and third have to do with how God is going to multiply the descendants of David, and the descendants of Levi. **He will multiply them more than all the stars in heaven, and all the grains of sand on the seashore.** He is BY NO MEANS done with the house of David, or the house of Levi. His covenant with them is sure, expansive and unstoppable! Everyone has been watching the house of David that came through Solomon, but they were unfaithful, so God will raise up another shoot from the rootstock of Jesse, a righteous "branch, sprout or twig". Will He also introduce some twist or turn to the fulfillment of His covenant with Levi?

This appears to be the case. **There are two other passages where the "Branch" is mentioned as a title in the OT. In both cases, they have to do with the high priest.** In Zechariah 3, the prophet sees in a vision, Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, dressed in filthy garments, with an adversary there to accuse him. God takes away his iniquity, puts clean clothes on him, and says that he and his friends are for a symbol, for **God is going to bring in His servant the Branch (*tsemach*).** Then God placed before Joshua a stone with seven eyes or fountains (same word in Hebrew). **God will carve an inscription on this stone, and will remove the iniquity of the land in one day.**

Then, in the next chapter, there is a golden lampstand with seven wicks, supplied with oil from two olive trees, one on the right, and one on the left. These represent the two anointed ones standing opposite the Lord of all the earth. **In this vision, it is Zerubbabel, from the Davidic line, who places the stone at the top of the house, with shouts of "Grace, grace!" (4:7).** The thing that is interesting here is that *both* the Levitical priests and the Davidic kings were anointed for their service, and were referred to as "anointed ones".

Then in chapter seven, we have the final reference to "the Branch". The people were to make a crown of silver and gold, and set it on the head of Joshua, the high priest, saying, "Behold, a man, Branch is his name, for he will branch out from underneath to build the temple of Yahweh" (6:12). He will be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices. The thing that is amazing to any student of the OT scriptures is that the **two offices, that of Davidic king and that of Levitical priest, with their very separate roles and functions seem to become merged together in the visions of Zechariah.** The priest is doing "Branch-things", including wearing a crown, sitting on a throne, and building a house for Yahweh, ...all things that were characteristic of David. Even the oil supplying the lampstand, which is a clear reference to the Temple lampstand, comes from *both* anointed ones.

How all of this was to be worked out in history was left to prayerful speculation. God did not choose to reveal anything more, at that time, except to say that He had not forgotten His covenants with the house of David, or that with the house of Levi. Somehow, He would supply so that they would never lack a man from their lineage to function in the fulfillment of the God-appointed duties.

As we saw last week, in Luke 3:24, Mary's great-grandfather was a Levi, and she had a kinswoman, Elizabeth, who was from the daughters of Aaron (Lk. 1:5). Furthermore, her lineage goes all the way back to David, ...but *not* through Solomon, but through a different son, Nathan (Lk. 3:31). **God very precisely, and literally, kept every good word of promise, as well as not to ignore the consequence of disobedience.**

Jesus was the embodiment and fulfillment of both of these covenants. He is both the foundation stone from which fountains of cleansing and forgiveness would flow. Through Him, the iniquity of the land would be removed in one day. The building of a new house, a new temple, a dwelling for God in the Spirit would be fulfilled through him, and He will also be the capstone of grace that will provide the completion of this house. Through Him the priestly line and the kingly line will never lack a man to fulfill their destined callings. And where did He grow up? Nazareth. This is from *netser*. Jesus was literally called, "Jesus the 'Branch'".

These are amazing prophetic and historical glimpses into how God works in history. At a time of near total devastation and hopelessness, God gives His people renewed hope, and even assures them that He has everything worked out ahead of time. **He has great things, unimaginable things for those who will look to Him and trust in Him.**

It is important to see how Jeremiah 33 begins. Jeremiah is held under house arrest in the courtyard of the guard, and the signs of the destruction of the city are becoming more evident on every side. They are tearing down houses to fortify the walls against the siege works of the Babylonians. Food is being rationed. His enemies threaten and rail against him. And yet, God tells him, even then, "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and will show you great and mighty things you have not known" (Jer. 33:3). Just as God was not done with David, or Levi, or Judah or Israel, He was not done with Jeremiah, ...and He is not done with you. **No matter how grim or difficult things may appear at times, God is bigger than all of that, and He encourages you to call out to Him. In faith, ask Him to lead you into the destiny He has in mind for you.** Those who would come to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). He will fulfill every good word for you, as well.